

## Message Text

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DRAFTED BY OES/TREYNDERS:VML

APPROVED BY D - DENIS LAMB

NSC:BHUBERMAN

S/S-O:TGMARTIN

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TO ALL NATO CAPITALS NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW NIACT IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:TSPA:NATO

SUBJECT:REENTRY OF SOVIET SATELLITE - PRESS BRIEFING

1. DR. BRZEZINSKI CALLED A PRESS BRIEFING AT APPROXIMATELY 0930 EST ON JANUARY 24 CONCERNING THE REENTRY OF COSMOS 954. YOU MAY WISH TO BRING HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BRIEFING, THE FULL TEXT OF WHICH IS REPEATED BELOW, TO APPROPRIATE HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

2. QUOTE THE PURPOSE OF THIS BRIEFING IS TO GIVE YOU THE DETAILS, ON THE RECORD, OF DIFFIULTY-WHICH IS PART OF THE SPACE AGE-WHICH HAS NOW BEEN RESOLVED BUT WHICH HAS UNCLASSIFIED

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BEEN OF SOME INTEREST OVER THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS. LATE IN DECEMBER WE GOT SOME INDICATIONS THAT A SOVIET COSMOS SATEL-LITE WITH A NUCLEAR REACTOR ON BOARD WAS ENCOUNTERING DIFFICULTIES AND THAT AT SOME POINT IT WOULD REENTER THE ATMOSPHERE WITH SOME UNCERTAINTIES AS TO WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WHEN IT DID SO. NAMELY, WOULD IT BURN UP IN THE ATMOSPHERE OR WOULD SOME PORTIONS OF THE REACTOR COME DOWN

TO EARTH POSING SOME RISKS OF CONTAMINATIOB IN EARLY JANUARY, MORE SPECIFICALLY ON JANUARY 12, I CONVEYED A MESSAGE TO DOBRYNIN ON THE PRESIDENT'S BEHALF POSING CERTAIN QUESTIONS TO THE SOVIETS REGARDING THIS MATTER, INDICATING THAT IF DEBRIS FELL NEAR OR ON A POPULATED AREA

THERE COULD BE SOME SERIOUS HAZARD TO THE PUBLIC. WE THEREFORE INVITED THE SOVIETS TO SHARE WHATEVER INFORMATION THEY HAD WITH US SO THAT APPROPRIATE MEASURES COULD BE TAKEN TO OBLVIAE SUCH DANGERS. DOBRYNIN COMMUNICATED THE SOVIET ANSWER TO ME ON JANUARY 13, WHICH WAS SOMEWHAT REASSURING BUT NOT FULLY SATISFACTORY FROM THE STANDPOINT OF WHAT WE FELT WE NEEDED TO KNOW. WE WENT BACK TO THEM ON JANUARY 17, AND ON JANUARY 19 DOBRYNIN CONVEYED TO ME MORE COMPLETE ANSWERS WHICH PROVIDED SOME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY THAT THERE WAS NO DANGER OF A CRITICAL MASS OCCURRING AND THEREFORE PRECIPITATING AN EXPLOSION -- IN EFFECT A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION. ON JANUARY 17 I SIGNED A DIRECTIVE ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, SECRETARY OF ENERGY, ADMINISTRATOR OF NASA, DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE, AND DIRECTOR OF OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY. THIS DIRECTIVE ESTABLISHED CERTAIN EMERGENCY PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT THAT DEBRIS WOULD BE PRESENT ON THE SURFACE AND IN THE EVENT THAT THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE A CLEANUP AND OTHER SAFETY MEASURES TAKEN. AN INTERAGENCY GROUP OF THE NSC UNDER MR. HUBERMAN, WHO IS UNCLASSIFIED

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SITTING RIGHT BEHIND ME, WAS COORDINATING THIS EFFORT. I HAVE BEEN ON THE PHONE IN THE COURSE OF THIS WEEKEND SEVERAL TIMES TO DOBRYNIN, MORE SPECIFICALLY ON JANUARY 22, JANUARY 23, AND EARLY THIS MORNING. LAST WEEK WE ALSO INFORMED FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS THAT COULD BE AFFECTED, AS-SURING THEM THAT WE ARE IN CLOSE AND COOPERATIVE TOUCH WITH THE SOVIETS, THAT WE ARE TRACKING THIS VERY CAREFULLY, THAT OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT THE CHANCES OF REAL HAZARD ARE QUITE SMALL, AND THAT WE WOULD KEEP THEM INFORMED OF WHAT TRANSPRIES. THE SATELLITE REENTERED THE ATMOSPHERE THIS MORNING AS OF 6:53 OUR TIME AND IT PROCEEDED TO DISINTEGRATE AND BURN UP IN THE COURSE OF A PATTERN FROM - LET'S SAY, ROUGHLY, - QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLAND OFF BRITISH COLUMBIA OVER NORTHERN CANADA. IN EFFECT THE PROCESS IS BEING COMPLETED ROUGHLY EAST OF THE GREAT SLAVE LAKE. IF ANY DEBRIS CAME DOWN IT WOULD HAVE COME DOWN ROUGHLY IN THE AREA EAST OF THE GREAT SLAVE LAKE IN A PATTERN REFLECTING THE TRAJEC-TORY. THE PRESIDENT SPOKE TO PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU EARLY THIS MORNING SHORTLY AFTER 7:00 A.M. I SPOKE TO MR. IVAN HEAD, WHO IS MR. TRUDEAU'S PERSONAL ASSISTANT. I HAVE ALSO INFORMED SOME OF THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS AS TO WHAT HAS TRANS-PIRED. I ALSO SPOKE TO MR. DOBRYNIN TO INFORM HIM OF WHAT

IS HAPPENED SO THAT HE CAN INFORM HIS GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE TWO AIRCRAFT ON THE WAY RIGHT NOW TO TAKE AIR SAMPLES TO DETERMINE WHETHER, IN FACT, SOME LIMITED CONTAMINATION MIGHT HAVE OCCURRED, ALTHOUGH WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT NONE IS INVOLVED. AND WE HAVE SOME OTHER AIRCRAFT READY ON A STANDBY BASIS IN THE EVENT THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME LIMITED

CONTAMINATION, IN WHICH CASE DECONTAMINATION PROCEDURES WOULD BE FOLLOWED. THOSE AIRCRAFT ARE ALREADY ON THE WAY. THIS WAS ARRANGED BY THE PRESIDENT AND MR. TRUDEAU. I WANT TO EMPHASIZE TWO POINTS IN CONCLUSION: ONE, THAT THIS DIFFICULTY INHERENT, I SUPPOSE, IN THE SPACE AGE IS COMPLETELY UNDER CONTROL AND THAT WE FEEL THAT THERE IS NO DANGER AND THAT, IN FACT, IT MAY TURN OUT THAT THERE IS EVEN NO  
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CONTAMINATION AT ALL; AND SECONDLY THAT THIS WAS HANDLED IN A VERY COOPERATIVE FASHION BY THE US GOVERNMENT, THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT, AND THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED. WE HAD DEVELOPED STANDBY EMERGENCY PROCEDURES WITHIN THE US GOVERNMENT IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY PROBLEM IN OUR TERRITORY. WE ARE NOW IN THE PROCESS OF USING SOME OF THESE FACILITIES IN A COOPERATIVE EFFORT WITH THE CANADIANS TO DETERMINE WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE SITUATION RIGHT NOW. I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THIS BECAUSE I DO NOT WISH IN ANY WAY TO IMPLY THAT THERE IS ANY MAJOR CRISIS HERE, AND I CERTAINLY DO NOT WISH TO IMPLY THAT THERE ARE ANY NEGATIVE INTERNATIONAL FACTORS INVOLVED. THIS WAS HANDLED RESPONSIBLY BY ALL OF THE GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED INCLUDING THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT.

Q. WHAT WAS THE FUNCTION OF THAT REACTOR IN THE SATELLITE?

A. TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY, A SOURCE OF ENERGY, FOR THE SATELLITE.

Q. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE SATELLITE?

A. THE SATELLITE IS ONE OF THE SOVIET SATELLITES. WE PRESUME IT'S A MILITARY SATELLITE, BUT I DON'T HAVE FURTHER DETAILS ON THAT.

Q. DO YOU THINK THAT IF YOU HAD NOT BROACHED THE SUBJECT WITH THE SOVIETS THEY WOULD NOT HAVE BROACHED IT WITH YOU?

A. I CANNOT SAY THAT. WE BROACHED IT AT A STAGE WHICH WAS STILL EARLY ENOUGH SO THAT SOME OF THE INITIAL SOVIET INFORMATION WAS PROVISIONAL. I REALLY CAN'T SAY WHETHER THEY WOULD OR WOULD NOT HAVE. I DO NOT KNOW.

Q. HOW DID YOU FIND OUT THAT THEY HAD IT ABOARD, AND IS THIS THE FIRST TIME THEY HAVE EVER TAKEN A NUCLEAR REACTOR  
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INTO SPACE?

A. I GATHER THAT THIS IS NOT UNUSUAL. (HUBERMAN: THEY HAVE DONE IT OVER 10 TIMES AND USUALLY WHAT THEY DO WITH WITH REACTOR IS WHEN IT IS FINISHED WITH ITS MISSION THEY BOOST IT INTO OUTER SPACE, REALLY OUTER SPACE WHERE IT STAYS IN ORBIT FOR ABOUT 500 TO 1,000 YEARS AND THE RADIO-ACTIVITY DECAYS. A THOUSAND YEARS FROM NOW IT WOULD COME BACK TO EARTH.)

Q. THEY HAD NO PLANS TO DO THAT THIS TIME?

A. HUBERMAN: YES. THEY HAD IT PLANNED, BUT THE SATELLITE MALFUNCTIONED.

Q. DID WE HAVE SOME IDEA THAT IT MIGHT?

A. WE HAD SOME INDICATIONS FROM OUR TRACKING THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING OUT OF ORDER.

Q. HAD WE KNOWN BEFORE THAT THEY HAD TAKEN THIS UP AND NEVER PROTESTED IT BEFORE?

A. IT HAD NEVER COME BACK DOWN BEFORE.

Q. WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS NOT TO PUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN SPACE, DO WE NOT? DID THIS VIOLATE THAT AGREEMENT?

A. NO. IT'S NOT A NUCLEAR WEAPON.

Q. SOME OF US CAME IN LATE. COULD YOU TELL US WHEN YOU FIRST OBSERVED THIS?

A. IT WAS SOMETIME DURING DECEMBER THAT WE BEGAN TO HAVE INDICATIONS THAT THERE MAY BE SOME DIFFICULTY, AND IN THE COURSE OF EARLY JANUARY IT BECAME CLEARER TO US THAT THESE DIFFICULTIES WERE APPROACHING A STAGE IN WHICH IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO START CONSIDERING SOME PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES. AND THIS IS WHY WE APPROACHED THE SOVIETS, AS I SAID EARLIER, ON JANUARY 12.

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Q. DID YOU SAY THAT IT CAME DOWN THIS MORNING:

A. YES. THE TIME ....

Q. ...SPACE, OR WAS THIS SOMETIME WHICH COULDN'T BE DONE?

A. HUBERMAN: APPARENTLY THEIR PROCEDURES IS TO BOOST THE REACTOR INTO A 500-1,000 YEAR ORBIT WHEN ITS MISSIONS IS COMPLETED. BECAUSE OF THE MALFUNCTION, THEY APPARENTLY

COULD NOT DO IT THIS TIME.

Q. SO DID THE SATELLITE COME DOWN ON ITS OWN?

A. ON ITS OWN, YES. THEY HAD NO CONTROL OVER IT. THEY HAD LOST CONTROL OVER IT.

Q. IT WAS UNMANNED?

A. UNMANNED.

Q. WHAT'S THE SIZE OF THE NUCLEAR REACTOR?

A. HUBERMAN: THE REACTOR IS ROUGHLY A YARD WIDE BY A YARD LONG, A YARD IN DIAMETER BY A YARD IN LENGTH, ROUGHLY. IF THEY USED A REACTOR THAT WE THINK THEY ARE LIKELY TO USE.

Q. IS THIS LIKE A SNAP REACTOR, A PLUTONIUM DEVICE?

A. HUBERMAN: NO. IT'S A URANIUM 235.

Q. WHY DID THEY PUT THEM IN SPACE IN THE FIRST PLACE?

A. HUBERMAN: TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY FOR THEIR MISSION ON THAT SATELLITE.

Q. IS THIS A PROGRAM THEY HAD ADVISED US ABOUT BEFORE, THAT THEY WERE USING REACTORS IN SPACE?

A. THEY ANNOUNCED, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS, ALL THEIR SPACE LAUNCHES, BUT THEY SAY IT'S FOR SPACE RESEARCH.

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Q. WE LEARNED OF THE NUCLEAR REACTOR INDEPENDENTLY?

A. INDEPENDENTLY.

Q. WOULD YOU CALL THIS A SURVEILLANCE SATELLITE?

A. I DON'T THINK WE WANT TO CHARACTERIZE IT.

Q. CAN WE GET THE DESCRIPTION? WE WEREN'T HERE.

A. IT'S A SATELLITE WITH A URNAIUM 235 NUCLEAR REACTOR, SMALL NUCLEAR REACTOR.

Q. WHEN YOU SAY ENERGY FOR THEIR MISSION, YOU MEAN FOR THE SATELLITE?

A. FOR THE SATELLITE, YES. ITS ELECTRICITY.

Q. THE SATELLITE CAME DOWN, OR DID IT BURN UP?

A. HUBERMAN: IT APPARENTLY BROKE UP. IT'S MOST LIKELY THAT THE REACTOR ITSELF, THE NUCLEAR FUEL, BURNED UP IN THE HIGH ATMOSPHERE. AND THEREFORE THE RADIOACTIVITY ON THE EARTH WOULD BE AS IF THEY HAD EXPLODED A BOMB AT A VERY HIGH ALTITUDE AND THEN THE DEBRIS JUST FLOATS AROUND THE EARTH FOR YEARS.

Q. WHAT SORT OF RADIOACTIVITY?

A. HUBERMAN: IT WOULD BE LIKE A VERY SMALL NUCLEAR BOMB.

Q. ALPHA? BETA?

A. HUBERMAN: WELL, IT WOULD BE LIKE A URANIUM BOMB,  
STRONTIUM, ZENON.

Q. HAVE WE EVER TAKEN A NUCLEAR REACTOR INTO SPACE?

A. HUBERMAN: YES, IN 1965, AND THEN WE SENT IT INTO A  
VERY HIGH ORBIT FOR 500 TO 1,000 YEARS.

Q. NEVER AGAIN?

A. IT WAS THE ONLY TIME WE HAVE DONE IT. THE SNAP 10A  
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REACTOR.

Q. DID THIS ORBIT REGULARLY GO OVER THE US, THE ONE YOU  
WERE OBSERVING IN JANUARY?

A. IT WENT ALL OVER THE WORLD.

Q. THERE WASN'T ANY NORMAL PATTERN THEN?

A. NO. IT JUST PROGRESSED ALL OVER THE WORLD.

Q. HOW MUCH U-235 WAS ABOARD, HOW MUCH FUEL?

A. HUBERMAN: I WOULD SAY OF THE ORDER OF MAYBE A LITTLE  
MORE THAN 100 LBS.

Q. WAS THIS ENRICHED?

A. YES, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE FOR THIS TYPE OF REACTOR.

Q. WHAT DID YOU SAY THE PURPOSE WAS, TO PROVIDE ELECTRI-  
CITY?

A. YES, FOR THE OPERATIONS OF THE SATELLITE IN ORDER THAT  
THEY COULD FULFILL WHATEVER MISSION WAS ASSIGNED TO IT,  
SCIENTIFIC OR OTHERWISE.

Q. HOW LONG HAD THE SATELLITE BEEN IN ORBIT?

A. SINCE SEPTEMBER 18.

Q. AND WE SAW IT COME DOWN? IT WAS OVER CANADIAN AIR  
SPACE?

A. THE RADAR. WE HAD IT TRACKED. AS I SAID, EAST OF THE  
GREAT SLAVE LAKE AREA. IT'S NORTH OF ALBERTA, NOT TOO FAR  
FROM PLACES CALLED FORT PROVIDENCE, FORT RESOLUTION, PORT  
RADUM, AND URANIUM CITY. I'M NOT KIDDING. THE PROVINCES  
ARE BRITISH COLUMBIA, THE NORTHWESTERN PART OF ALBERTA,  
AND THEN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORY.

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Q. WHO LIVES OUT THERE? IS IT POPULATED?

A. NOBODY. VERY LITTLE.

Q. ARE THE CANADIANS PUTTING OUT AN ALERT?

A. NO, BECAUSE AGAIN I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT CHANCES ARE OVERWHELMING THAT IT BURNED OUT IN THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE PROCESS OF REENTRY AND AS SOON AS THE AIRCRAFT ARE THERE AND HAVE TAKEN SAMPLES WE WILL KNOW FOR SURE. BUT THE EXPECTATION IS THAT VERY LITTLE, IF ANY, CONTAMINATION WILL HAVE DEVELOPED.

Q. DO WE HAVE ANY EVIDENCE THAT THERE WAS A WEAPON ON THIS SATELLITE?

A. NO. NO. LET'S NOT TREMBLE PLEASE.

Q. WHERE ARE THE AIRCRAFT FLYING FROM?

A. FROM THE UNITED STATES.

Q. FROM WHEREABOUTS?

A. ALL OVER THE UNITED STATES. SEVERAL PLACES. WE HAVE THEM POSITIONED IN SEVERAL PLACES.

Q. COULD YOU GIVE US THE ORBIT OF THE SATELLITE BEFORE THE ORBIT DISINTEGRATED?

A. IT HAD LOTS OF ORBITS.

Q. HOW MANY MILES FROM THE EARTH?

A. ROUGHLY 150 MILES ORIGINALLY, WHEN IT WAS ON ITS PROPER ORBIT. IT WAS DECAYING ALL THE TIME IN THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS IT WAS AROUND 100 MILES AND THEN IT STARTS SENSING THE ATMOSPHERE AND GETS SUCKED IN.

Q. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE SATELLITE? WAS IT AN OBSERVATION SATELLITE OR WHAT?

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A. IT'S A SOVIET SATELLITE. MILITARY SATELLITE.

Q. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THE PURPOSE OF IT WAS?

A. WELL, WE CAN'T GO INTO THE DETAILS.

Q. GIVEN THE NATURE OF ITS REENTRY, WOULD YOU BE AS CALM NOW HAD IT, THE REENTRY AND BURNING UP, OCCURRED OVER A

POPULATED AREA?

A. WELL, FIRST OF ALL IT COULD HAVE BURNED OUT OVER A POPULATED AREA WITHOUT ANY NEGATIVE EFFECTS WHATSOEVER. NOW, IF IT DIDN'T THEN OF COURSE THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN SOME HAZARD AND THAT IS WHY WE APPROACHED THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE, BECAUSE WHEN WE APPROACHED THEM WE DID NOT KNOW.

Q. SO YOU DON'T KNOW THE EFFECTS NOW - YOU DON'T YET KNOW THE EFFECTS OF THAT PARTICULAR DISINTEGRATION?

A. THAT'S RIGHT. THE PROBABILITIES ARE OVERWHELMING THAT IT BURNED OUT. BUT YOU CANNOT BE SURE, AND THERE-

FORE WE WANT TO TAKE AIR SAMPLES, AND WE WILL BE TAKING AIR SAMPLES, TO ESTABLISH IF IN FACT IT DID BURN OUT. HUBERMAN: LET ME ADD JUST ONE THING - WE WERE PLANNING FOR THE WORST IN TERMS OF OUR DOMESTIC PLANNING AND GETTING ALL THESE AIRPLANES TOGETHER. WE ASSUMED THAT IT WOULDNT BURN OUT EVEN THOUGH THERE WAS AN OVERWHELMING PROBABILITY THAT IT WOULD. WE PREPARED FOR THE WORST AND WE HAVE THESE TEAMS TOGETHER TO PICK UP THE REACTOR PIECES ONCE THEY FOUND THEM.

THE WAY THEY WERE GOING TO USE THE SAMPLING AIRPLANES IS BY LOOKING OUT INTO THE ATMOSPHERE, THE HIGH ATMOSPHERE, WITH SPECIAL INSTRUMENTS TO SEE IF THE RADIOACTIVITY IS THERE. IF THEY FIND IT THERE, THEN IT'S VERY, VERY LIKELY THAT IT DIDN'T ...

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Q. HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE BEFORE YOU GET THESE AIR SAMPLES?

A. THE AIRPLANES ARE GETTING UNDER WAY RIGHT NOW. THEY HAVE PROBABLY TAKEN OFF ALREADY. THERE ARE TWO SAMPLING AIRCRAFT AND IT WILL PROBABLY TAKE THEM ABOUT FIVE HOURS, SIX HOURS TO GET THERE.

Q. THEN HOW LONG IS THE PROCESS?

A. IT DEPENDS ON HOW READILY THEY LOCATE THE WRECK.

Q. HOURS? DAYS?

A. PROBABLY HOURS.

Q. WHAT IS THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTAMINATION DRIFTING DOWN INTO WIND CURRENTS THAT WOULD COME TO THE UNITED STATES?

A. HUBERMAN: WELL, IT WOULD RESULT IN VERY MINIMAL CONTAMINATION BECAUSE IT WOULD GO AROUND FOR YEARS AND WOULD DRIFT VERY SLOWLY IN, LIKE ONE OF THE CHINESE OR FRENCH TESTS, EXCEPT MUCH SMALLER.

Q. WHEN THE ORBIT FIRST BEGAN TO DISINTEGRATE WE

APPROACHED THE SOVIETS?

A. WE APPROACHED THE SOVIETS ON JANUARY 12.

Q. JANUARY 12. DID THEY KNOW THAT THE ORBIT WAS DISINTEGRATING AS WELL?

A. YES. THEY KNEW THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG. THEY KNEW THAT AS OF EARLIER THIS MONTH WHEN THEY TRIED TO ASSERT CONTROL OVER THE SATELLITE AND COULD NOT DO SO.

Q. AND WILL SOVIET SPACE OFFICIALS GO OUT AND LOOK FOR THIS? COME HERE?

A. I DON'T KNOW. WE HAVEN'T CROSSED THAT BRIDGE. YOU KNOW, WE MAY DISCOVER THAT THERE IS NOTHING THERE.

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Q. WE ARE REQUIRED IF THERE ARE ANY PIECES OF THAT REACTOR UNDER A TREATY TO RETURN THOSE PIECES, THE SPACE JUNK, TO THE SOVIETS, ARE WE NOT?

A. HUBERMAN: IT WOULD BE THE CANADIANS' ISSUE. THE SOVIETS ARE ALSO LIABLE FOR ANY DAMAGE AND CLEANUP COSTS.

Q. HAVE THE SOVIETS GIVEN US ASSURANCES THAT THERE IS NO WEAPON ON THIS SATELLITE?

A. THAT'S NOT AN ISSUE.

Q. HAVE THEY SAID THERE ISN'T?

A. WE DIDN'T ASK THEM. THAT'S NOT AN ISSUE. WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THERE IS.

Q. WHAT DO YOU BASE YOUR CERTAINTY ON THAT IT DID BURN UP BEFORE IT REACHED ...?

A. JUST IN THE LIGHT OF SCIENTIFIC EXPERIENCE. THE VERY HIGH PROBABILITY IS THAT IT WOULD BURN UP ENTIRELY. WITH JUST FRAGMENTS OF STRUCTURAL MATERIAL COMING IN.

Q. IS THERE ANY PARTICULAR MATERIAL ABOARD A REACTOR THAT WOULDN'T NORMALLY BE ABOARD A SPACE VEHICLE THAT WE DO HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH? SOME SPECIAL METAL THAT MIGHT BE MORE RESISTANT TO BURNING UP IN THE ATMOSPHERE? IS THERE ANY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THIS WOULD ACT DIFFERENTLY?

A. HUBERMAN: NO. NORMALLY ON SOMETHING LIKE THIS WE WOULD DESIGN THE REACTOR TO BURN UP ON REENTRY AND THE SOVIETS HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY IN FACT DESIGNED IT THE SAME WAY.

Q. DID THIS HAVE A NAME?

A. COSMOS SATELLITE. AND I WANT TO EMPHASIZE ONCE MORE THESE TWO POINTS BECAUSE YOU CAN WELL IMAGINE THIS IS SEN-  
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SITIVE. IT'S THE FIRST TIME ANYTHING LIKE THIS HAS HAPPENED. THIS PROBLEM INVOLVES MINIMAL RISK, AND WE THINK THAT IN FACT THERE MAY BE NONE. SECONDLY, IT WAS HANDLED THROUGH VERY EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, INVOLVING THE SOVIETS ALSO.

Q. BUT YOU SAID YOU WERE PREPARING FOR THE WORST. AND YOU HAVEN'T TOLD US YET WHAT WOULD BE THE RESULTS OF ANY HUMAN BEINGS IN THE PATH IF THE WORST HAPPENED. COULD YOU TELL US THAT?

A. WELL, BECAUSE FIRST OF ALL WE DON'T WANT TO ENGAGE IN HORROR SCENARIOS WHICH MAY BE VERY APPEALING TO THE IMAGINATION. OBVIOUSLY IF THE CONTAMINATION HAD INVOLVED A DENSELY POPULATED AREA THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN SOME CONCERNS REGARDING HAZARDS TO HEALTH. AND IT WOULD DEPEND ON HOW MUCH. AND THEREFORE THERE IS NO POINT SPECULATING ON IT. AND IF THE REACTOR HAD NOT BURNED OUT, WHICH AGAIN IS ALMOST CLOSE TO BEING TOTALLY UNLIKELY.

Q. ISN'T IT CORRECT TO SAY THAT IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS YOU WOULD ALWAYS PLAN ON A WORST-CASE SCENARIO. EVEN WITH THE REMOTEST POSSIBILITY YOU ALWAYS DEAL WITH THE WORST POSSIBLE CASE.

A. YES. IT'S ILLOGICAL TO DO ANY OTHER THING. SURE.

Q. AND YOU ARE?

A. BEN HUBERMAN. HE IS ON THE NSC STAFF. HE COORDINATED THE INTERAGENCY EFFORT PERTAINING TO THIS ISSUE.  
END PRESS BRIEFING TEXT. VANCE

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FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 019297 SENT ACTION ALL NATO CAPITALS TOKYO  
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DECEMBER WE GOT SOME INDICATIONS THAT A SOVIET COSMOS SATEL-LITE WITH A NUCLEAR REACTOR ON BOARD WAS ENCOUNTERING DIF-FICULTIES AND THAT AT SOME POINT IT WOULD REENTER THE ATMOSPHERE WITH SOME UNCERTAINTIES AS TO WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WHEN IT DID SO. NAMELY, WOULD IT BURN UP IN THE ATMOSPHERE OR WOULD SOME PORTIONS OF THE REACTOR COME DOWN TO EARTH POSING SOME RISKS OF CONTAMINATIOB IN EARLY JANUARY, MORE SPECIFICALLY ON JANUARY 12, I CONVEYED A MESSAGE TO DOBRYNIN ON THE PRESIDENT'S BEHALF POSING CER-TAIN QUESTIONS TO THE SOVIETS REGARDING THIS MATTER, INDI-CATING THAT IF DEBRIS FELL NEAR OR ON A POPULATED AREA

THERE COULD BE SOME SERIOUS HAZARD TO THE PUBLIC. WE THEREFORE INVITED THE SOVIETS TO SHARE WHATEVER INFORMATION THEY HAD WITH US SO THAT APPROPRIATE MEASURES COULD BE TAKEN TO OBLVIAE SUCH DANGERS. DOBRYNIN COMMUNICATED THE SOVIET ANSWER TO ME ON JANUARY 13, WHICH WAS SOMEWHAT REASSURING BUT NOT FULLY SATISFACTORY FROM THE STANDPOINT

OF WHAT WE FELT WE NEEDED TO KNOW. WE WENT BACK TO THEM ON JANUARY 17, AND ON JANUARY 19 DOBRYNIN CONVEYED TO ME MORE COMPLETE ANSWERS WHICH PROVIDED SOME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY THAT THERE WAS NO DANGER OF A CRITICAL MASS OCCURRING AND THEREFORE PRECIPITATING AN EXPLOSION -- IN EFFECT A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION. ON JANUARY 17 I SIGNED A DIRECTIVE ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, SECRETARY OF ENERGY, ADMINISTRATOR OF NASA, DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE, AND DIRECTOR OF OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY. THIS DIRECTIVE ESTABLISHED CERTAIN EMERGENCY PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT THAT DEBRIS WOULD BE PRESENT ON THE SURFACE AND IN THE EVENT THAT THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE A CLEANUP AND OTHER SAFETY MEASURES TAKEN. AN INTERAGENCY GROUP OF THE NSC UNDER MR. HUBERMAN, WHO IS SITTING RIGHT BEHIND ME, WAS COORDINATING THIS EFFORT.

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I HAVE BEEN ON THE PHONE IN THE COURSE OF THIS WEEKEND SEVERAL TIMES TO DOBRYNIN, MORE SPECIFICALLY ON JANUARY 22, JANUARY 23, AND EARLY THIS MORNING. LAST WEEK WE ALSO INFORMED FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS THAT COULD BE AFFECTED, AS-SURING THEM THAT WE ARE IN CLOSE AND COOPERATIVE TOUCH WITH THE SOVIETS, THAT WE ARE TRACKING THIS VERY CAREFULLY, THAT OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT THE CHANCES OF REAL HAZARD ARE QUITE SMALL, AND THAT WE WOULD KEEP THEM INFORMED OF WHAT TRANSPRIES. THE SATELLITE REENTERED THE ATMOSPHERE THIS MORNING AS OF 6:53 OUR TIME AND IT PROCEEDED TO DISINTEGRATE AND BURN UP IN THE COURSE OF A PATTERN FROM - LET'S SAY, ROUGHLY, - QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLAND OFF BRITISH COLUMBIA OVER NORTHERN CANADA. IN EFFECT THE PROCESS IS BEING COMPLETED ROUGHLY EAST OF THE GREAT SLAVE LAKE. IF ANY DEBRIS CAME DOWN IT WOULD HAVE COME DOWN ROUGHLY IN THE AREA EAST OF THE GREAT SLAVE LAKE IN A PATTERN REFLECTING THE TRAJEC-TORY. THE PRESIDENT SPOKE TO PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU EARLY THIS MORNING SHORTLY AFTER 7:00 A.M. I SPOKE TO MR. IVAN HEAD, WHO IS MR. TRUDEAU'S PERSONAL ASSISTANT. I HAVE ALSO INFORMED SOME OF THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS AS TO WHAT HAS TRANS-PIRED. I ALSO SPOKE TO MR. DOBRYNIN TO INFORM HIM OF WHAT IS HAPPENED SO THAT HE CAN INFORM HIS GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE TWO AIRCRAFT ON THE WAY RIGHT NOW TO TAKE AIR SAMPLES TO DETERMINE WHETHER, IN FACT, SOME LIMITED CONTAMINATION MIGHT HAVE OCCURRED, ALTHOUGH WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT NONE IS INVOLVED. AND WE HAVE SOME OTHER AIRCRAFT READY ON A STAND-BY BASIS IN THE EVENT THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME LIMITED

CONTAMINATION, IN WHICH CASE DECONTAMINATION PROCEDURES WOULD BE FOLLOWED. THOSE AIRCRAFT ARE ALREADY ON THE WAY. THIS WAS ARRANGED BY THE PRESIDENT AND MR. TRUDEAU. I WANT TO EMPHASIZE TWO POINTS IN CONCLUSION: ONE, THAT THIS DIFFICULTY INHERENT, I SUPPOSE, IN THE SPACE AGE IS COMPLETE-

LY UNDER CONTROL AND THAT WE FEEL THAT THERE IS NO DANGER  
AND THAT, IN FACT, IT MAY TURN OUT THAT THERE IS EVEN NO  
CONTAMINATION AT ALL; AND SECONDLY THAT THIS WAS HANDLED  
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IN A VERY COOPERATIVE FASHION BY THE US GOVERNMENT, THE  
SOVIET GOVERNMENT, AND THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED.  
WE HAD DEVELOPED STANDBY EMERGENCY PROCEDURES WITHIN THE  
US GOVERNMENT IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY PROBLEM IN OUR TERRI-  
TORY. WE ARE NOW IN THE PROCESS OF USING SOME OF THESE  
FACILITIES IN A COOPERATIVE EFFORT WITH THE CANADIANS TO  
DETERMINE WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE SITUATION RIGHT NOW.  
I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THIS BECAUSE I DO NOT WISH IN ANY WAY  
TO IMPLY THAT THERE IS ANY MAJOR CRISIS HERE, AND I CER-  
TAINLY DO NOT WISH TO IMPLY THAT THERE ARE ANY NEGATIVE  
INTERNATIONAL FACTORS INVOLVED. THIS WAS HANDLED RESPONSI-  
BLY BY ALL OF THE GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED INCLUDING THE  
SOVIET GOVERNMENT.

Q. WHAT WAS THE FUNCTION OF THAT REACTOR IN THE SATELLITE?

A. TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY, A SOURCE OF ENERGY, FOR THE  
SATELLITE.

Q. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE SATELLITE?

A. THE SATELLITE IS ONE OF THE SOVIET SATELLITES. WE PRE-  
SUME IT'S A MILITARY SATELLITE, BUT I DON'T HAVE FURTHER  
DETAILS ON THAT.

Q. DO YOU THINK THAT IF YOU HAD NOT BROACHED THE SUBJECT  
WITH THE SOVIETS THEY WOULD NOT HAVE BROACHED IT WITH YOU?

A. I CANNOT SAY THAT. WE BROACHED IT AT A STAGE WHICH  
WAS STILL EARLY ENOUGH SO THAT SOME OF THE INITIAL SOVIET  
INFORMATION WAS PROVISIONAL. I REALLY CAN'T SAY WHETHER  
THEY WOULD OR WOULD NOT HAVE. I DO NOT KNOW.

Q. HOW DID YOU FIND OUT THAT THEY HAD IT ABOARD, AND IS  
THIS THE FIRST TIME THEY HAVE EVER TAKEN A NUCLEAR REACTOR  
INTO SPACE?  
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A. I GATHER THAT THIS IS NOT UNUSUAL. (HUBERMAN: THEY  
HAVE DONE IT TVER 10 TIMES AND USUALLY WHAT THEY DO WITH  
WITH REACTOR IS WHEN IT IS FINISHED WITH ITS MISSION THEY  
BOOST IT INTO OUTER SPACE, REALLY OUTER SPACE WHERE IT  
STAYS IN ORBIT FOR ABOUT 500 TO 1,000 YEARS AND THE RADIO-  
ACTIVITY DECAYS. A THOUSAND YEARS FROM NOW IT WOULD COME

BACK TO EARTH.)

Q. THEY HAD NO PLANS TO DO THAT THIS TIME?

A. HUBERMAN: YES. THEY HAD IT PLANNED, BUT THE SATELLITE MALFUNCTIONED.

Q. DID WE HAVE SOME IDEA THAT IT MIGHT?

A. WE HAD SOME INDICATIONS FROM OUR TRACKING THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING OUT OF ORDER.

Q. HAD WE KNOWN BEFORE THAT THEY HAD TAKEN THIS UP AND NEVER PROTESTED IT BEFORE?

A. IT HAD NEVER COME BACK DOWN BEFORE.

Q. WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS NOT TO PUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN SPACE, DO WE NOT? DID THIS VIOLATE THAT AGREEMENT?

A. NO. IT'S NOT A NUCLEAR WEAPON.

Q. SOME OF US CAME IN LATE. COULD YOU TELL US WHEN YOU FIRST OBSERVED THIS?

A. IT WAS SOMETIME DURING DECEMBER THAT WE BEGAN TO HAVE INDICATIONS THAT THERE MAY BE SOME DIFFICULTY, AND IN THE COURSE OF EARLY JANUARY IT BECAME CLEARER TO US THAT THESE DIFFICULTIES WERE APPROACHING A STAGE IN WHICH IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO START CONSIDERING SOME PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES. AND THIS IS WHY WE APPROACHED THE SOVIETS, AS I SAID EARLIER, ON JANUARY 12.

Q. DID YOU SAY THAT IT CAME DOWN THIS MORNING:

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A. YES. THE TIME ....

Q. ...SPACE, OR WAS THIS SOMETIME WHICH COULDN'T BE DONE?

A. HUBERMAN: APPARENTLY THEIR PROCEDURES IS TO BOOST THE REACTOR INTO A 500-1,000 YEAR ORBIT WHEN ITS MISSIONS IS COMPLETED. BECAUSE OF THE MALFUNCTION, THEY APPARENTLY COULD NOT DO IT THIS TIME.

Q. SO DID THE SATELLITE COME DOWN ON ITS OWN?

A. ON ITS OWN, YES. THEY HAD NO CONTROL OVER IT. THEY HAD LOST CONTROL OVER IT.

Q. IT WAS UNMANNED?

A. UNMANNED.

Q. WHAT'S THE SIZE OF THE NUCLEAR REACTOR?

A. HUBERMAN: THE REACTOR IS ROUGHLY A YARD WIDE BY A YARD LONG, A YARD IN DIAMETER BY A YARD IN LENGTH, ROUGHLY. IF

THEY USED A REACTOR THAT WE THINK THEY ARE LIKELY TO USE.

Q. IS THIS LIKE A SNAP REACTOR, A PLUTONIUM DEVICE?

A. HUBERMAN: NO. IT'S A URANIUM 235.

Q. WHY DID THEY PUT THEM IN SPACE IN THE FIRST PLACE?

A HUBERMAN: TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY FOR THEIR MISSION ON THAT SATELLITE.

Q. IS THIS A PROGRAM THEY HAD ADVISED US ABOUT BEFORE, THAT THEY WERE USING REACTORS IN SPACE?

A. THEY ANNOUNCED, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS, ALL THEIR SPACE LAUNCHES, BUT THEY SAY IT'S FOR SPACE RESEARCH.

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Q. WE LEARNED OF THE NUCLEAR REACTOR INDEPENDENTLY?

A. INDEPENDENTLY.

Q. WOULD YOU CALL THIS A SURVEILLANCE SATELLITE?

A. I DON'T THINK WE WANT TO CHARACTERIZE IT.

Q. CAN WE GET THE DESCRIPTION? WE WEREN'T HERE.

A. IT'S A SATELLITE WITH A URNIAIUM 235 NUCLEAR REACTOR, SMALL NUCLEAR REACTOR.

Q. WHEN YOU SAY ENERGY FOR THEIR MISSION, YOU MEAN FOR THE SATELLITE?

A. FOR THE SATELLITE, YES. ITS ELECTRICITY.

Q. THE SATELLITE CAME DOWN, OR DID IT BURN UP?

A. HUBERMAN: IT APPARENTLY BROKE UP. IT'S MOST LIKELY THAT THE REACTOR ITSELF, THE NUCLEAR FUEL, BURNED UP IN THE HIGH ATMOSPHERE. AND THEREFORE THE RADIOACTIVITY ON THE EARTH WOULD BE AS IF THEY HAD EXPLODED A BOMB AT A VERY HIGH ALTITUDE AND THEN THE DEBRIS JUST FLOATS AROUND THE EARTH FOR YEARS.

Q. WHAT SORT OF RADIOACTIVITY?

A. HUBERMAN: IT WOULD BE LIKE A VERY SMALL NUCLEAR BOMB.

Q. ALPHA? BETA?

A. HUBERMAN: WELL, IT WOULD BE LIKE A URANIUM BOMB, STRONTIUM, ZENON.

Q. HAVE WE EVER TAKEN A NUCLEAR REACTOR INTO SPACE?

A. HUBERMAN: YES, IN 1965, AND THEN WE SENT IT INTO A VERY HIGH ORBIT FOR 500 TO 1,000 YEARS.

Q. NEVER AGAIN?

A. IT WAS THE ONLY TIME WE HAVE DONE IT. THE SNAP 10A REACTOR.

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Q. DID THIS ORBIT REGULARLY GO OVER THE US, THE ONE YOU WERE OBSERVING IN JANUARY?

A. IT WENT ALL OVER THE WORLD.

Q. THERE WASN'T ANY NORMAL PATTERN THEN?

A. NO. IT JUST PROGRESSED ALL OVER THW WORLD.

Q. HOW MUCH U-235 WAS ABOARD, HOW MUCH FUEL?

A. HUBERMAN: I WOULD SAY OF THE ORDER OF MAYBE A LITTLE MORE THAN 100 LBS.

Q. WAS THIS ENRICHED?

A. YES, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE FOR THIS TYPE OF REACTOR.

Q. WHAT DID YOU SAY THE PURPOSE WAS, TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY?

A. YES, FOR THE OPERATIONS OF THE SATELLITE IN ORDER THAT THEY CTULD FULFILL WHATEVER MISSION WAS ASSIGNED TO IT, SCIENTIFIC OR OTHERWISE.

Q. HOW LONG HAD THE SATELLITE BEEN IN ORBIT?

A. SINCE SEPTEMBER 18.

Q. AND WE SAW IT COME DOWN? IT WAS OVER CANADIAN AIR SPACE?

A. THE RADAR. WE HAD IT TRACKED. AS I SAID, EAST OF THE GREAT SLAVE LAKE AREA. IT'S NORTH OF ALBERTA, NOT TOO FAR FROM PLACES CALLED FORT PROVIDENCE, FORT RESOLUTION, PORT RADIUM, AND URANIUM CITY. I'M NOT KIDDING. THE PROVINCES ARE BRITISH COLUMBIA, THE NORTHWESTERN PART OF ALBERTA, AND THEN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORY.

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Q. WHO LIVES OUT THERE? IS IT POPULATED?

A. NOBODY. VERY LITTLE.

Q. ARE THE CANADIANS PUTTING OUT AN ALERT?

A. NO, BECAUSE AGAIN I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT CHANCES ARE OVERWHELMING THAT IT BURNED OUT IN THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE

PROCESS OF REENTRY AND AS SOON AS THE AIRCRAFT ARE THERE AND HAVE TAKEN SAMPLES WE WILL KNOW FOR SURE. BUT THE EXPECTATION IS THAT VERY LITTLE, IF ANY, CONTAMINATION WILL HAVE DEVELOPED.

Q. DO WE HAVE ANY EVIDENCE THA THERE WAS A WEAPON ON THIS SATELLITE?

A. NO. NO. LET'S NOT TREMBLE PLEASE.

Q. WHERE ARE THE AIRCRAFT FLYING FROM?

A. FROM THE UNITED STATES.

Q. FROM WHEREABOUTS?

A. ALL OVER THE UNITED STATES. SEVERAL PLACES. WE HAVE THEM POSITIONED IN SEVERAL PLACES.

Q. COULD YOU GIVE US THE ORBIT OF THE SATELLITE BEFORE THE ORBIT DISINTEGRATED?

A. IT HAD LOTS OF ORBITS.

Q. HOW MANY MILES FROM THE EARTH?

A. ROUGHLY 150 MILES ORIGINALLY, WHEN IT WAS ON ITS PROPER ORBIT. IT WAS DECAYING ALL THE TIME IN THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS IT WAS AROUND 100 MILES AND THEN IT STARTS SENSING THE ATMOSPHERE AND GETS SUCKED IN.

Q. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE SATELLITE? WAS IT AN OBSERVATION SATELLITE OR WHAT?

A. IT'S A SOVIET SATELLITE. MILITARY SATELLITE.

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Q. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THE PURPOSE OF IT WAS?

A. WELL, WE CAN'T GO INTO THE DETAILS.

Q. GIVEN THE NATURE OF ITS REENTRY, WOULD YOU BE AS CALM NOW HAD IT, THE REENTRY AND BURNING UP, OCCURRED OVER A POPULATED AREA?

A. WELL, FIRST OF ALL IT COULD HAVE BURNED OUT OVER A POPULATED AREA WITHOUT ANY NEGATIVE EFFECTS WHATSOEVER. NOW, IF IT DIDN'T THEN OF COURSE THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN SOME HAZARD AND THAT IS WHY WE APPROACHED THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE, BECAUSE WHEN WE APPROACHED THEM WE DID NOT KNOW.

Q. SO YOU DON'T KNOW THE EFFECTS NOW - YOU DON'T YET KNOW THE EFFECTS OF THAT PARTICULAR DISINTEGRATION?

A. THAT'S RIGHT. THE PROBABILITIES ARE OVERWHELMING THAT IT BURNED OUT. BUT YOU CANNOT BE SURE, AND THERE-

FORE WE WANT TO TAKE AIR SAMPLES, AND WE WILL BE TAKING AIR SAMPLES, TO ESTABLISH IF IN FACT IT DID BURN OUT. HUBERMAN: LET ME ADD JUST ONE THING - WE WERE PLANNING FOR THE WORST IN TERMS OF OUR DOMESTIC PLANNING AND GETTING ALL THESE AIRPLANES TOGETHER. WE ASSUMED THAT IT WOULDNT BURN OUT EVEN THOUGH THERE WAS AN OVERWHELMING PROBABILITY THAT IT WOULD. WE PREPARED FOR THE WORST AND WE HAVE THESE TEAMS TOGETHER TO PICK UP THE REACTOR PIECES ONCE THEY FOUND THEM.

THE WAY THEY WERE GOING TO USE THE SAMPLING AIRPLANES IS BY LOOKING OUT INTO THE ATMOSPHERE, THE HIGH ATMOSPHERE, WITH SPECIAL INSTRUMENTS TO SEE IF THE RADIOACTIVITY IS THERE. IF THEY FIND IT THERE, THEN IT'S VERY, VERY LIKELY THAT IT DIDN'T ...

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Q. HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE BEFORE YOU GET THESE AIR SAMPLES?

A. THE AIRPLANES ARE GETTING UNDER WAY RIGHT NOW. THEY HAVE PROBABLY TAKEN OFF ALREADY. THERE ARE TWO SAMPLING AIRCRAFT AND IT WILL PROBABLY TAKE THEM ABOUT FIVE HOURS, SIX HOURS TO GET THERE.

Q. THEN HOW LONG IS THE PROCESS?

A. IT DEPENDS ON HOW READILY THEY LOCATE THE WRECK.

Q. HOURS? DAYS?

A. PROBABLY HOURS.

Q. WHAT IS THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTAMINATION DRIFTING DOWN INTO WIND CURRENTS THAT WOULD COME TO THE UNITED STATES?

A. HUBERMAN: WELL, IT WOULD RESULT IN VERY MINIMAL CONTAMINATION BECAUSE IT WOULD GO AROUND FOR YEARS AND WOULD DRIFT VERY SLOWLY IN, LIKE ONE OF THE CHINESE OR FRENCH TESTS, EXCEPT MUCH SMALLER.

Q. WHEN THE ORBIT FIRST BEGAN TO DISINTEGRATE WE APPROACHED THE SOVIETS?

A. WE APPROACHED THE SOVIETS ON JANUARY 12.

Q. JANUARY 12. DID THEY KNOW THAT THE ORBIT WAS DISINTEGRATING AS WELL?

A. YES. THEY KNEW THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG. THEY KNEW THAT AS OF EARLIER THIS MONTH WHEN THEY TRIED TO ASSERT CONTROL OVER THE SATELLITE AND COULD NOT DO SO.

Q. AND WILL SOVIET SPACE OFFICIALS GO OUT AND LOOK FOR THIS? COME HERE?

A. I DON'T KNOW. WE HAVEN'T CROSSED THAT BRIDGE. YOU  
KNOW, WE MAY DISCOVER THAT THERE IS NOTHING THERE.

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Q. WE ARE REQUIRED IF THERE ARE ANY PIECES OF THAT REACTOR  
UNDER A TREATY TO RETURN THOSE PIECES, THE SPACE JUNK,  
TO THE SOVIETS, ARE WE NOT?

A. HUBERMAN: IT WOULD BE THE CANADIANS' ISSUE. THE SOVIETS  
ARE ALSO LIABLE FOR ANY DAMAGE AND CLEANUP COSTS.

Q. HAVE THE SOVIETS GIVEN US ASSURANCES THAT THERE IS NO  
WEAPON ON THIS SATELLITE,

A. THAT'S NOT AN ISSUE.

Q. HAVE THEY SAID THERE ISN'T?

A. WE DIDN'T ASK THEM. THAT'S NOT AN ISSUE. WE HAVE NO  
REASON TO BELIEVE THERE IS.

Q. WHAT DO YOU BASE YOUR CERTAINTY ON THAT IT DID BURN UP  
BEFORE IT REACHED ...?

A. JUST IN THE LIGHT OF SCIENTIFIC EXPERIENCE. THE VERY  
HIGH PROBABILITY IS THAT IT WOULD BURN UP ENTIRELY. WITH  
JUST FRAGMENTS OF STRUCTURAL MATERIAL COMING IN.

Q. IS THERE ANY PARTICULAR MATERIAL ABOARD A REACTOR THAT  
WOULDNT NORMALLY BE ABOARD A SPACE VEHICLE THAT WE  
DO HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH? SOME SPECIAL METAL THAT MIGHT BE  
MORE RESISTANT TO BURNING UP IN THE ATMOSPHERE? IS  
THERE ANY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THIS WOULD ACT DIFFERENTLY?

A. HUBERMAN: NO. NORMALLY ON SOMETHING LIKE THIS WE  
WOULD DESIGN THE REACTOR TO BURN UP ON REENTRY AND THE  
SOVIETS HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY IN FACT DESIGNED IT THE  
SAME WAY.

Q. DID THIS HAVE A NAME?

A. COSMOS SATELLITE. AND I WANT TO EMPHASIZE ONCE MORE  
THESE TWO POINTS BECAUSE YOU CAN WELL IMAGINE THIS IS SEN-  
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SITIVE. IT'S THE FIRST TIME ANYTHING LIKE THIS HAS HAPPENED. THIS PROBLEM INVOLVES MINIMAL RISK, AND WE THINK  
THAT IN FACT THERE MAY BE NONE. SECONDLY, IT WAS HANDLED  
THROUGH VERY EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION,  
INVOLVING THE SOVIETS ALSO.

Q. BUT YOU SAID YOU WERE PREPARING FOR THE WORST. AND YOU HAVENT TOLD US YET WHAT WOULD BE THE RESULTS OF ANY HUMAN BEINGS IN THE PATH IF THE WORST HAPPENED. COULD YOU TELL US THAT?

A. WELL, BECAUSE FIRST OF ALL WE DONT WANT TO ENGAGE IN HORROR SCENARIOS WHICH MAY BE VERY APPEALING TO THE IMAGINATION. OBVIOUSLY IF THE CONTAMINATION HAD INVOLVED A DENSELY POPULATED AREA THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN SOME CONCERNS REGARDING HAZARDS TO HEALTH. AND IT WOULD DEPEND ON HOW MUCH. AND THEREFORE THEREIS NO POINT SPECULATING ON IT. AND IF THE REACTOR HAD NOT BURNED OUT, WHICH AGAIN IS ALMOST CLOSE TO BEING TOTALLY UNLIKELY.

Q. ISN'T IT CORRECT TO SAY THAT IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS YOU WOULD ALWAYS PLAN ON A WORST-CASE SCENARIO. EVEN WITH THE REMOTEST POSSIBILITY YOU ALWAYS DEAL WITH THE WORST

POSSIBLE CASE.

A. YES. IT'S ILLOGICAL TO DO ANY OTHER THING. SURE.

Q. AND YOU ARE?

A. BEN HUBERMAN. HE IS ON THE NSC STAFF. HE COORDINATED THE INTERAGENCY EFFORT PERTAINING TO THIS ISSUE.  
END PRESS BRIEFING TEXT. VANCE UNQUOTE VANCE

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FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 019297 ACTION ALL NATO CAPITALS  
TOKYO WELLINGTON CANBERRA MOSCOW 24 JAN 78

QUOTE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:TSPA:NATO

SUBJECT:REENTRY OF SOVIET SATELLITE - PRESS BRIEFING

1. DR. BRZEZINSKI CALLED A PRESS BRIEFING AT APPROXIMATELY 0930 EST ON JANUARY 24 CONCERNING THE REENTRY OF COSMOS 954.

YOU MAY WISH TO BRING HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BRIEFING, THE FULL TEXT OF WHICH IS REPEATED BELOW, TO APPROPRIATE HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

2. QUOTE THE PURPOSE OF THIS BRIEFING IS TO GIVE YOU THE DETAILS, ON THE RECORD, OF DIFFIULTY-WHICH IS PART OF UNCLASSIFIED

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THE SPACE AGE-WHICH HAS NOW BEEN RESOLVED BUT WHICH HAS BEEN OF SOME INTEREST OVER THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS. LATE IN DECEMBER WE GOT SOME INDICATIONS THAT A SOVIET COSMOS SATEL-LITE WITH A NUCLEAR REACTOR ON BOARD WAS ENCOUNTERING DIFFICULTIES AND THAT AT SOME POINT IT WOULD REENTER THE ATMOSPHERE WITH SOME UNCERTAINTIES AS TO WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WHEN IT DID SO. NAMELY, WOULD IT BURN UP IN THE ATMOSPHERE OR WOULD SOME PORTIONS OF THE REACTOR COME DOWN TO EARTH POSING SOME RISKS OF CONTAMINATIOB IN EARLY JANUARY, MORE SPECIFICALLY ON JANUARY 12, I CONVEYED A MESSAGE TO DOBRYNIN ON THE PRESIDENT'S BEHALF POSING CERTAIN QUESTIONS TO THE SOVIETS REGARDING THIS MATTER, INDICATING THAT IF DEBRIS FELL NEAR OR ON A POPULATED AREA

THERE COULD BE SOME SERIOUS HAZARD TO THE PUBLIC. WE THEREFORE INVITED THE SOVIETS TO SHARE WHATEVER INFORMATION THEY HAD WITH US SO THAT APPROPRIATE MEASURES COULD BE TAKEN TO OBLViate SUCH DANGERS. DOBRYNIN COMMUNICATED THE SOVIET ANSWER TO ME ON JANUARY 13, WHICH WAS SOMEWHAT REASSURING BUT NOT FULLY SATISFACTORY FROM THE STANDPOINT OF WHAT WE FELT WE NEEDED TO KNOW. WE WENT BACK TO THEM ON JANUARY 17, AND ON JANUARY 19 DOBRYNIN CONVEYED TO ME MORE COMPLETE ANSWERS WHICH PROVIDED SOME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY THAT THERE WAS NO DANGER OF A CRITICAL MASS OCCURRING AND THEREFORE PRECIPITATING AN EXPLOSION -- IN EFFECT A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION. ON JANUARY 17 I SIGNED A DIRECTIVE ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, SECRETARY OF ENERGY, ADMINISTRATOR OF NASA, DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE, AND DIRECTOR OF OFFICE OF

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY. THIS DIRECTIVE ESTABLISHED CERTAIN EMERGENCY PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT THAT DEBRIS WOULD BE PRESENT ON THE SURFACE AND IN THE EVENT THAT THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE A CLEANUP AND OTHER SAFETY MEASURES TAKEN.  
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AN INTERAGENCY GROUP OF THE NSC UNDER MR. HUBERMAN, WHO IS SITTING RIGHT BEHIND ME, WAS COORDINATING THIS EFFORT. I HAVE BEEN ON THE PHONE IN THE COURSE OF THIS WEEKEND SEVERAL TIMES TO DOBRYNIN, MORE SPECIFICALLY ON JANUARY 22, JANUARY 23, AND EARLY THIS MORNING. LAST WEEK WE ALSO INFORMED FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS THAT COULD BE AFFECTED, AS-SURING THEM THAT WE ARE IN CLOSE AND COOPERATIVE TOUCH WITH THE SOVIETS, THAT WE ARE TRACKING THIS VERY CAREFULLY, THAT OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT THE CHANCES OF REAL HAZARD ARE QUITE SMALL, AND THAT WE WOULD KEEP THEM INFORMED OF WHAT TRANSPiRES. THE SATELLITE REENTERED THE ATMOSPHERE THIS MORNING AS OF 6:53 OUR TIME AND IT PROCEEDED TO DISINTEGRATE AND BURN UP IN THE COURSE OF A PATTERN FROM - LET'S SAY, ROUGHLY, - QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLAND OFF BRITISH COLUMBIA OVER NORTHERN CANADA. IN EFFECT THE PROCESS IS BEING COMPLETED ROUGHLY EAST OF THE GREAT SLAVE LAKE. IF ANY DEBRIS CAME DOWN IT WOULD HAVE COME DOWN ROUGHLY IN THE AREA EAST OF THE GREAT SLAVE LAKE IN A PATTERN REFLECTING THE TRAJEC-TORY. THE PRESIDENT SPOKE TO PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU EARLY THIS MORNING SHORTLY AFTER 7:00 A.M. I SPOKE TO MR. IVAN HEAD, WHO IS MR. TRUDEAU'S PERSONAL ASSISTANT. I HAVE ALSO INFORMED SOME OF THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS AS TO WHAT HAS TRANS-PIRED. I ALSO SPOKE TO MR. DOBRYNIN TO INFORM HIM OF WHAT IS HAPPENED SO THAT HE CAN INFORM HIS GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE TWO AIRCRAFT ON THE WAY RIGHT NOW TO TAKE AIR SAMPLES TO DETERMINE WHETHER, IN FACT, SOME LIMITED CONTAMINATION MIGHT HAVE OCCURRED, ALTHOUGH WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT NONE IS INVOLVED. AND WE HAVE SOME OTHER AIRCRAFT READY ON A STAND-BY BASIS IN THE EVENT THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME LIMITED

CONTAMINATION, IN WHICH CASE DECONTAMINATION PROCEDURES WOULD BE FOLLOWED. THOSE AIRCRAFT ARE ALREADY ON THE WAY. THIS WAS ARRANGED BY THE PRESIDENT AND MR. TRUDEAU. I WANT TO EMPHASIZE TWO POINTS IN CONCLUSION: ONE, THAT THIS DIFFICULTY INHERENT, I SUPPOSE, IN THE SPACE AGE IS COMPLETE-LY UNDER CONTROL AND THAT WE FEEL THAT THERE IS NO DANGER  
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AND THAT, IN FACT, IT MAY TURN OUT THAT THERE IS EVEN NO CONTAMINATION AT ALL; AND SECONDLY THAT THIS WAS HANDLED

IN A VERY COOPERATIVE FASHION BY THE US GOVERNMENT, THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT, AND THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED. WE HAD DEVELOPED STANDBY EMERGENCY PROCEDURES WITHIN THE US GOVERNMENT IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY PROBLEM IN OUR TERRITORY. WE ARE NOW IN THE PROCESS OF USING SOME OF THESE FACILITIES IN A COOPERATIVE EFFORT WITH THE CANADIANS TO DETERMINE WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE SITUATION RIGHT NOW. I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THIS BECAUSE I DO NOT WISH IN ANY WAY TO IMPLY THAT THERE IS ANY MAJOR CRISIS HERE, AND I CERTAINLY DO NOT WISH TO IMPLY THAT THERE ARE ANY NEGATIVE INTERNATIONAL FACTORS INVOLVED. THIS WAS HANDLED RESPONSIBLY BY ALL OF THE GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED INCLUDING THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT.

Q. WHAT WAS THE FUNCTION OF THAT REACTOR IN THE SATELLITE?

A. TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY, A SOURCE OF ENERGY, FOR THE SATELLITE.

Q. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE SATELLITE?

A. THE SATELLITE IS ONE OF THE SOVIET SATELLITES. WE PRESUME IT'S A MILITARY SATELLITE, BUT I DON'T HAVE FURTHER DETAILS ON THAT.

Q. DO YOU THINK THAT IF YOU HAD NOT BROACHED THE SUBJECT WITH THE SOVIETS THEY WOULD NOT HAVE BROACHED IT WITH YOU?

A. I CANNOT SAY THAT. WE BROACHED IT AT A STAGE WHICH WAS STILL EARLY ENOUGH SO THAT SOME OF THE INITIAL SOVIET INFORMATION WAS PROVISIONAL. I REALLY CAN'T SAY WHETHER THEY WOULD OR WOULD NOT HAVE. I DO NOT KNOW.

Q. HOW DID YOU FIND OUT THAT THEY HAD IT ABOARD, AND IS UNCLASSIFIED

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THIS THE FIRST TIME THEY HAVE EVER TAKEN A NUCLEAR REACTOR INTO SPACE?

A. I GATHER THAT THIS IS NOT UNUSUAL. (HUBERMAN: THEY HAVE DONE IT OVER 10 TIMES AND USUALLY WHAT THEY DO WITH THE REACTOR IS WHEN IT IS FINISHED WITH ITS MISSION THEY BOOST IT INTO OUTER SPACE, REALLY OUTER SPACE WHERE IT STAYS IN ORBIT FOR ABOUT 500 TO 1,000 YEARS AND THE RADIOACTIVITY DECAYS. A THOUSAND YEARS FROM NOW IT WOULD COME BACK TO EARTH.)

Q. THEY HAD NO PLANS TO DO THAT THIS TIME?

A. HUBERMAN: YES. THEY HAD IT PLANNED, BUT THE SATELLITE MALFUNCTIONED.

Q. DID WE HAVE SOME IDEA THAT IT MIGHT?

A. WE HAD SOME INDICATIONS FROM OUR TRACKING THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING OUT OF ORDER.

Q. HAD WE KNOWN BEFORE THAT THEY HAD TAKEN THIS UP AND NEVER PROTESTED IT BEFORE?

A. IT HAD NEVER COME BACK DOWN BEFORE.

Q. WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS NOT TO PUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN SPACE, DO WE NOT? DID THIS VIOLATE THAT AGREEMENT?

A. NO. IT'S NOT A NUCLEAR WEAPON.

Q. SOME OF US CAME IN LATE. COULD YOU TELL US WHEN YOU FIRST OBSERVED THIS?

A. IT WAS SOMETIME DURING DECEMBER THAT WE BEGAN TO HAVE INDICATIONS THAT THERE MAY BE SOME DIFFICULTY, AND IN THE COURSE OF EARLY JANUARY IT BECAME CLEARER TO US THAT THESE DIFFICULTIES WERE APPROACHING A STAGE IN WHICH IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO START CONSIDERING SOME PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES. AND THIS IS WHY WE APPROACHED THE SOVIETS, AS I SAID EARLIER, ON JANUARY 12.

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Q. DID YOU SAY THAT IT CAME DOWN THIS MORNING:

A. YES. THE TIME ....

Q. ...SPACE, OR WAS THIS SOMETIME WHICH COULDN'T BE DONE?

A. HUBERMAN: APPARENTLY THEIR PROCEDURES IS TO BOOST THE REACTOR INTO A 500-1,000 YEAR ORBIT WHEN ITS MISSIONS IS COMPLETED. B CAUSE OF THE MALFUNCTION, THEY APPARENTLY COULD NOT DO IT THIS TIME.

Q. SO DID THE SATELLITE COME DOWN ON ITS OWN?

A. ON ITS OWN, YES. THEY HAD NO CONTROL OVER IT. THEY HAD LOST CONTROL OVER IT.

Q. IT WAS UNMANNED?

A. UNMANNED.

Q. WHAT'S THE SIZE OF THE NUCLEAR REACTOR?

A. HUBERMAN: THE REACTOR IS ROUGHLY A YARD WIDE BY A YARD LONG, A YARD IN DIAMETER BY A YARD IN LENGTH, ROUGHLY. IF THEY USED A REACTOR THAT WE THINK THEY ARE LIKELY TO USE.

Q. IS THIS LIKE A SNAP REACTOR, A PLUTONIUM DEVICE?

A. HUBERMAN: NO. IT'S A URANIUM 235.

Q. WHY DID THEY PUT THEM IN SPACE IN THE FIRST PLACE?

A. HUBERMAN: TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY FOR THEIR MISSION ON THAT SATELLITE.

Q. IS THIS A PROGRAM THEY HAD ADVISED US ABOUT BEFORE,  
THAT THEY WERE USING REACTORS IN SPACE?

A. THEY ANNOUNCED, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR INTERNATIONAL  
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AGREEMENTS, ALL THEIR SPACE LAUNCHES, BUT THEY SAY IT'S  
FOR SPACE RESEARCH.

Q. WE LEARNED OF THE NUCLEAR REACTOR INDEPENDENTLY?

A. INDEPENDENTLY.

Q. WOULD YOU CALL THIS A SURVEILLANCE SATELLITE?

A. I DON'T THINK WE WANT TO CHARACTERIZE IT.

Q. CAN WE GET THE DESCRIPTION? WE WEREN'T HERE.

A. IT'S A SATELLITE WITH A URANIUM 235 NUCLEAR REACTOR,  
SMALL NUCLEAR REACTOR.

Q. WHEN YOU SAY ENERGY FOR THEIR MISSION, YOU MEAN FOR  
THE SATELLITE?

A. FOR THE SATELLITE, YES. ITS ELECTRICITY.

Q. THE SATELLITE CAME DOWN, OR DID IT BURN UP?

A. HUBERMAN: IT APPARENTLY BROKE UP. IT'S MOST LIKELY  
THAT THE REACTOR ITSELF, THE NUCLEAR FUEL, BURNED UP IN  
THE HIGH ATMOSPHERE. AND THEREFORE THE RADIOACTIVITY ON  
THE EARTH WOULD BE AS IF THEY HAD EXPLODED A BOMB AT A  
VERY HIGH ALTITUDE AND THEN THE DEBRIS JUST FLOATS AROUND  
THE EARTH FOR YEARS.

Q. WHAT SORT OF RADIOACTIVITY?

A. HUBERMAN: IT WOULD BE LIKE A VERY SMALL NUCLEAR BOMB.

Q. ALPHA? BETA?

A. HUBERMAN: WELL, IT WOULD BE LIKE A URANIUM BOMB,  
STRONTIUM, ZENON.

Q. HAVE WE EVER TAKEN A NUCLEAR REACTOR INTO SPACE?

A. HUBERMAN: YES, IN 1965, AND THEN WE SENT IT INTO A  
VERY HIGH ORBIT FOR 500 TO 1,000 YEARS.

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Q. NEVER AGAIN?

A. IT WAS THE ONLY TIME WE HAVE DONE IT. THE SNAP 10A

REACTOR.

Q. DID THIS ORBIT REGULARLY GO OVER THE US, THE ONE YOU  
WERE OBSERVING IN JANUARY?

A. IT WENT ALL OVER THE WORLD.

Q. THERE WASN'T ANY NORMAL PATTERN THEN?

A. NO. IT JUST PROGRESSED ALL OVER THE WORLD.

Q. HOW MUCH U-235 WAS ABOARD, HOW MUCH FUEL?

A. HUBERMAN: I WOULD SAY OF THE ORDER OF MAYBE A LITTLE  
MORE THAN 100 LBS.

Q. WAS THIS ENRICHED?

A. YES, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE FOR THIS TYPE OF REACTOR.

Q. WHAT DID YOU SAY THE PURPOSE WAS, TO PROVIDE ELECTRI-  
CITY?

A. YES, FOR THE OPERATIONS OF THE SATELLITE IN ORDER THAT  
THEY COULD FULFILL WHATEVER MISSION WAS ASSIGNED TO IT,  
SCIENTIFIC OR OTHERWISE.

Q. HOW LONG HAD THE SATELLITE BEEN IN ORBIT?

A. SINCE SEPTEMBER 18.

Q. AND WE SAW IT COME DOWN? IT WAS OVER CANADIAN AIR  
SPACE?

A. THE RADAR. WE HAD IT TRACKED. AS I SAID, EAST OF THE  
GREAT SLAVE LAKE AREA. IT'S NORTH OF ALBERTA, NOT TOO FAR  
FROM PLACES CALLED FORT PROVIDENCE, FORT RESOLUTION, PORT  
RADeUM, AND URANIUM CITY. I'M NOT KIDDING. THE PROVINCES  
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ARE BRITISH COLUMBIA, THE NORTHWESTERN PART OF ALBERTA,  
AND THEN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORY.

Q. WHO LIVES OUT THERE? IS IT POPULATED?

A. NOBODY. VERY LITTLE.

Q. ARE THE CANADIANS PUTTING OUT AN ALERT?

A. NO, BECAUSE AGAIN I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT CHANCES ARE  
OVERWHELMING THAT IT BURNED OUT IN THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE  
PROCESS OF REENTRY AND AS SOON AS THE AIRCRAFT ARE THERE  
AND HAVE TAKEN SAMPLES WE WILL KNOW FOR SURE. BUT THE EX-  
PECTATION IS THAT VERY LITTLE, IF ANY, CONTAMINATION WILL  
HAVEZPGM  
IMMVEMAJM

Q. DO WE HAVE ANY EVIDENC THAT THRE WAS A WEAPON ON THIS  
SATELLITE?

A. NO. NO. LET'S NOT TREMBLE PLEASE.

Q. WHERE ARE THE AIRCRAFT FLYING FROM?

A. FROM THE UNITED STATES.

Q. FROM WHEREABOUTS?

A. ALL OVER THE UNITED STATES. SEVERAL PLACES. WE HAVE THEM POSITIONED IN SEVERAL PLACES.

Q. COULD YOU GIVE US THE ORBIT OF THE SATELLITE BEFORE THE ORBIT DISINTEGRATED?

A. IT HAD LOTS OF ORBITS.

Q. HOW MANY MILES FROM THE EARTH?

A. ROUGHLY 150 MILS ORIGINALLY, WHEN IT WAS ON ITS PROPER ORBIT. IT WAS DECAYING ALL THE TIME IN THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS IT WAS AROUND 100 MILES AND THEN IT STARTS SENSING THE ATMOSPHERE AND GETS SUCKED IN.

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Q. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE SATELLITE? WAS IT AN OBSERVATION SATELLITE OR WHAT?

A. IT'S A SOVIET SATELLITE. MILITARY SATELLITE.

Q. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THE PURPOSE OF IT WAS?

A. WELL, WE CAN'T GO INTO THE DETAILS.

Q. GIVEN THE NATURE OF ITS REENTRY, WOULD YOU BE AS CALM NOW HAD IT, THE REENTRY AND BURNING UP, OCCURRED OVR A POPULATED AREA?

A. WELL, FIRST OF ALL IT COULD HAVE BURNED OUT OVER A POPULATED AREA WITHOUT ANY NEGATIVE EFFECTS WHATSOEVER. NOW, IF IT DIDN'T THEN OF COURSE THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN SOME HAZARD AND THAT IS WHY WE APPROACHED THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE, BECAUSE WHEN WE APPROACHED THEM WE DID NOT KNOW.

Q. SO YOU DON'T KNOW THE EFFECTS NOW - YOU DON'T YET KNOW THE EFFECTS OF THAT PARTICULAR DISINTEGRATION?

A. THAT'S RIGHT. THE PROBABILITIES ARE OVERWHELMING THAT IT BURNED OUT. BUT YOU CANNOT BE SURE, AND THERE-

FORE WE WANT TO TAKE AIR SAMPLES, AND WE WILL BE TAKING AIR SAMPLS, TO ESTABLISH IF IN FACT IT DID BURN OUT. HUBERMAN: LET ME ADD JUST ONE THING - WE WERE PLANNING FOR THE WORST IN TERMS OF OUR DOMESTIC PLANNING AND GETTING ALL THESE AIRPLANES TOGETHER. WE ASSUMED THAT IT WOULDN'T BURN OUT EVEN THOUGH THERE WAS AN OVERWHELMING PROBABILITY THAT IT WOULD. WE PREPARED FOR THE WORST AND WE HAVE THESE TEAMS

TOGETHER TO PICK UP THE REACTOR PIECES ONCE THEY FOUND THEM.

THE WAY THY WERE GOING TO USE THE SAMPLING AIRPLANES IS  
BY LOOKING OUT INTO THE ATMOSPHERE, TH HIGH ATMOSPHERE,  
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WITH SPCIAL INSTRUMENTS TO SEE IF THE RADIOACTIVITY IS  
THERE. IF THEY FIND IT THERE, THEN IT'S VERY, VERY LIKELY  
THAT IT DIDN'T ...

Q. HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE BEFORE YOU GET THESE AIR SAMPLES?

A. THE AIRPLANES ARE GETTING UNDER WAY RIGHT NOW. THEY  
HAVE PROBABLY TAKEN OFF ALREADY. THERE ARE TWO SAMPLING  
AIRCRAFT AND IT WILL PROBABLY TAKE THEM ABOUT FIVE HOURS,  
SIX HOURS TO GET THERE.

Q. THEN HOW LONG IS THE PROCESS?

A. IT DEPENDS ON HOW READILY THY LOCATE THE WRECK.

Q. HOURS? DAYS?

A. PROBABLY HOURS.

Q. WHAT IS THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTAMINATION DRIFTING  
DOWN INTO WIND CURRENTS THAT WOULD COME TO THE UNITED  
STATES?

A. HUBERMAN: WELL, IT WOULD RESULT IN VERY MINIMAL CONTAM-  
INATION BECAUSE IT WOULD GO AROUND FOR YEARS AND WOULD  
DRIFT VERY SLOWLY IN, LIKE ONE OF THE CHINESE OR FRENCH  
TESTS, EXCEPT MUCH SMALLER.

Q. WHEN THE ORBIT FIRST BEGAN TO DISINTEGRATE WE  
APPROACHED THE SOVIETS?

A. WE APPROACHED THE SOVIETS ON JANUARY 12.

Q. JANUARY 12. DID THEY KNOW THAT TH ORBIT WAS DISIN-  
TEGRATING AS WELL?

A. YES. THEY KNEW THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG. THEY  
KNEW THAT AS OF EARLIER THIS MONTH WHEN THEY TRIED TO  
ASSERT CONTROL OVER THE SATELLITE AND COULD NOT DO SO.

Q. AND WILL SOVIET SPACE OFFICIALS GO OUT AND LOOK FOR  
THIS? COME HERE?

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A. I DONT KNOW. WE HAVENT CROSSED THAT BRIDGE. YOU  
KNOW, WE MAY DISCOVER THAT THRE IS NOTHING THERE.

Q. WE ARE REQUIRED IF THERE ARE ANY PIECES OF THAT REACTOR UNDER A TREATY TO RETURN THOSE PIECES, THE SPACE JUNK, TO THE SOVIETS, ARE WE NOT?

A. HUBERMAN: IT WOULD BE THE CANADIANS' ISSUE. THE SOVIETS ARE ALSO LIABLE FOR ANY DAMAGE AND CLEANUP COSTS.

Q. HAVE THE SOVIETS GIVEN US ASSURANCES THAT THERE IS NO WEAPON ON THIS SATELLITE?

A. THAT'S NOT AN ISSUE.

Q. HAVE THEY SAID THERE ISN'T?

A. WE DIDN'T ASK THEM. THAT'S NOT AN ISSUE. WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THERE IS.

Q. WHAT DO YOU BASE YOUR CERTAINTY ON THAT IT DID BURN UP BEFORE IT RACHED ...?

A. JUST IN THE LIGHT OF SCIENTIFIC EXPERIENCE. THE VERY HIGH PROBABILITY IS THAT IT WOULD BURN UP ENTIRELY. WITH JUST FRAGMENTS OF STRUCTURAL MATERIAL COMING IN.

Q. IS THERE ANY PARTICULAR MATERIAL ABOARD A REACTOR THAT WOULDN'T NORMALLY BE ABOARD A SPACE VEHICLE THAT WE DO HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH? SOME SPECIAL METAL THAT MIGHT BE MORE RESISTANT TO BURNING UP IN THE ATMOSPHERE? IS THERE ANY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THIS WOULD ACT DIFFERENTLY?

A. HUBERMAN: NO. NORMALLY ON SOMETHING LIKE THIS WE WOULD DESIGN THE REACTOR TO BURN UP ON REENTRY AND THE SOVIETS HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY IN FACT DESIGNED IT THE SAME WAY.

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Q. DID THIS HAVE A NAME?

A. COSMOS SATELLITE. AND I WANT TO EMPHASIZE ONCE MORE THESE TWO POINTS BECAUSE YOU CAN WELL IMAGINE THIS IS SENSITIVE. IT'S THE FIRST TIME ANYTHING LIKE THIS HAS HAPPENED. THIS PROBLEM INVOLVES MINIMAL RISK, AND WE THINK THAT IN FACT THERE MAY BE NONE. SECONDLY, IT WAS HANDLED THROUGH VERY EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, INVOLVING THE SOVIETS ALSO.

Q. BUT YOU SAID YOU WERE PREPARING FOR THE WORST. AND YOU HAVEN'T TOLD US YET WHAT WOULD BE THE RESULTS OF ANY HUMAN BEINGS IN THE PATH IF THE WORST HAPPENED. COULD YOU TELL US THAT?

A. WELL, BECAUSE FIRST OF ALL WE DON'T WANT TO ENGAGE IN HORROR SCENARIOS WHICH MAY BE VERY APPEALING TO THE IMAGINATION. OBVIOUSLY IF THE CONTAMINATION HAD INVOLVED A DENSELY POPULATED AREA THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN SOME CONCERN

REGARDING HAZARDS TO HEALTH. AND IT WOULD DEPEND ON HOW MUCH. AND THEREFORE THERE IS NO POINT SPECULATING ON IT. AND IF THE REACTOR HAD NOT BURNED OUT, WHICH AGAIN IS ALMOST CLOSE TO BEING TOTALLY UNLIKELY.

Q. ISN'T IT CORRECT TO SAY THAT IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS YOU WOULD ALWAYS PLAN ON A WORST-CASE SCENARIO. EVEN WITH THE REMOTEST POSSIBILITY YOU ALWAYS DEAL WITH THE WORST POSSIBLE CASE.

A. YES. IT'S ILLOGICAL TO DO ANY OTHER THING. SURE.

Q. AND YOU ARE?

A. BEN HUBERMAN. HE IS ON THE NSC STAFF. HE COORDINATED THE INTERAGENCY EFFORT PERTAINING TO THIS ISSUE.  
END PRSS BRIEFING TEXT. VANCE  
UNQUOTE VANCE".

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